

It is not surprising that runaway former minister Saviour Kasukuwere should use Friday's absurd Mugabe Day to attack the regime which overthrew the former president. Predictably defending Mugabe, Kasukuwere said Zimbabwe's situation was worse under Mnangagwa who, he said, was protecting corrupt criminal cartels who were raping the nation, bleeding it of billions of dollars (see: <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-179741.html>),

Many Zimbabweans appear ambivalent about the change of regime. They include youths who are meant to be inspired by a public holiday on Mugabe's birthday. Cathy Buckle in her latest Letter from Zimbabwe says 'it's hard to see what our youth have got to celebrate. Unemployment around 90%, inflation over 500%, queues for money, food and fuel and not even electricity today. Hopes of getting a job are extremely slim; manufacturing capacity predicted at 27% this year and a guarantee of tear gas, police truncheons and brutality if you dare to demonstrate.'

Buckle's comment about a clampdown on dissent is confirmed by a news report of a wave of arrests of people taking part in anti-government protests against the worsening political and economic crisis (see: <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-179751.html>).

In her letter, Cathy Buckle looks at how food aid supposed to feed the hungry is being diverted to the black market by corrupt officials in Zimbabwe and sold in neighbouring countries: 'A Parliamentary Portfolio Committee heard that abuse of the subsidised maize facility was rife. Senior executives in the government's GMB (Grain Marketing Board) were implicated: allocating subsidised maize to millers far in excess of their capacity. The millers were in turn diverting the maize to the black market and selling it to neighbouring countries, making huge profits in the process. There were accounts of trucks from the DR Congo offloading copper in South Africa and on their return journey through Zimbabwe filling their empty trucks with our subsidised

maize. The corruption extends to border officials who stamp documents with false declarations as to the source of the cargo on trucks which proceed to exit Zimbabwe loaded with our cheap maize.'

She goes on to note that 20 years ago this week the farm invasions began: 'twenty years later Zimbabwe as a whole continues to pay the price of the destruction of commercial agriculture' (see: <http://cathybuckle.co.zw/looting-cheap-food-from-hungry-zimbabweans/>).

Buckle's comments are backed up by a coruscating news report: 'Factories grind to a halt as Zimbabwe's economy implodes'. The article notes: Zisco's once-imposing steelworks are a series of derelict buildings, rusting pipes and sheets of corrugated iron. As the natural bush encroaches, the buildings are increasingly home to ever-opportunistic monkeys and baboons.' (See: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/factories-grind-halt-zimbabwe-economy-050000822.html>),

Other points

- February has been a turbulent time in the UK weatherwise with gales and endless rain causing widespread flooding. Nevertheless someone came down to join us today all the way from Scotland.

- Thanks to those who braved the foul weather to help set up the Vigil today: Delice Gavazah, Jonathan Kariwo, Godfrey Katerere, Esther Munyira, Mary Muteyerwa, Qiniso Sibanda, Ephraim Tapa and Kevin Wheeldon. Thanks to Esther for looking after the front table, to Kevin for handing out flyers, to Mary and Delice for drumming and to Jonathan for photos. Thanks also for a further contribution to the ROHR's Valentine fundraising dinner From Delice Gavazah.

- For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimb88abwevigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

FOR THE RECORD: ---10 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR fundraising dinner dance.** Saturday 29th February from 6 pm till late. Postponed from 15th February because of bad weather. Venue: 38 Marcon Place, London E8 1LP. The event is in aid of women living with HIV/AIDS in rural Zimbabwe. Tickets £30. Contact: Esther Munyira 07492058107, Molly Ngavaimbe 07415443973, Patricia Masamba 07708116625 or Margaret Munenge 07384300283

- **ROHR general members' meeting.** Saturday 14th March from 11.30 am. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, Belvedere Road SE1 8XX. Contact: Ephraim Tapa 07940793090, Patricia Masamba 07708116625, Esther Munyira 07492058107.

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil's mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events, sales etc to support the activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is <http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>

. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

- **World Day of Prayer for Zimbabwe.** Friday 6th March. This year the focus is on Zimbabwe and the service has been prepared by Christian women in Zimbabwe. The theme is 'Rise! Take you mat and walk'. Christians all round the world will be praying for Zimbabwe. Try to get your own church involved. For more information check: <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

- **Living on the Edge.** Tuesday 10th March from 7 – 9 pm (doors open at 6 pm). Venue: Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR. The event is organised by the Mike Campbell Foundation. Among the speakers are Chief Felix Ndiweni and Beatrice Mtetwa. For full details of the event check: https://media.wix.com/ugd/02876c_5b68a136280c42ebbf39f8ebbb722299.pdf

- **The Vigil's book 'Zimbabwe Emergency'** is based on our weekly diaries. It records how

events in Zimbabwe have unfolded as seen by the diaspora in the UK. It chronicles the economic disintegration, violence, growing oppression and political manoeuvring – and the tragic human cost involved. It is available at the Vigil. All proceeds go to the Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe's work in Zimbabwe. The book is also available from Amazon.

- **Facebook pages:** Vigil: <https://www.facebook.com/zimbabwevigil>

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>